Evaluating a Wellness Program for Health-Seekers at the Copley-Price Family YMCA: Barriers, Challenges, and Improvements

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**Background**

- YMCA KickStart program designed to encourage members to develop and adopt healthy lifestyles
- Consists of three free one-on-one appointments with wellness coaches over a one month period
- Designed to familiarize members with machines, classes, and other available resources
- Most enrollees fail to complete all three appointments

**Objectives**

- To determine Kickstart completion rates and identify when program dropout is occurring
- To identify sociodemographic risk factors for non-completion
- To identify potential gaps in Kickstart participant and wellness coach relationships
- To examine attitudes and experiences of participants and coaches that may influence completion

**Methods**

- Utilized YMCA’s MobileFit tracking system to examine completion rates and demographic characteristics for the 135 participants enrolled between 1/1/18 and 3/31/18
- Surveyed 14 non-completers and 6 completers via e-mail
  - Demographic characteristics and ratings of experience
  - Open-ended questions on personal experiences with the program
- Interviewed 12 of 14 wellness coaches
  - Demographic characteristics
  - Open-ended questions on the training they received, barriers encountered, and personal insight on their experiences working with participants
- Surveys and interviews administered on Google Forms, compiled in Excel, and analyzed in Epi Info

**Key Findings**

**Completion rates and sociodemographic predictors**

- Of the 135 enrolled, 66% completed one visit, 31% completed two, and 11% completed all three.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KickStart Completion by Age Group</th>
<th>Completers (%)</th>
<th>Non-Completers (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>(n=8)</td>
<td>(n=97)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17-34 years</td>
<td>1 (2.4%)</td>
<td>40 (97.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-49 years</td>
<td>4 (13.3%)</td>
<td>26 (86.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-69 years</td>
<td>1 (3.3%)</td>
<td>29 (96.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 70 years</td>
<td>2 (50.0%)</td>
<td>2 (50.0%)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Age and gender were available for 105 members; the highest completion rates were in the 35-49 year (4/30; 13%) and >70 year (2/4; 50%) age groups. The difference in age was significant at the p = 0.003 level. Completion rates did not differ by gender.

**Factors influencing completion**

Why are participants dropping out of KickStart?
- Lack of tailored approach
- Difficulties in scheduling and follow up
- Inconsistencies in wellness coach training
- Mismatch between program goals and participant expectations

- "Communication with my trainer was difficult...I called twice. I never received a follow up from anyone" (Non-completer)
- "My second session ended without any info about another session. I didn’t know it was something I could keep doing" (Non-completer)
- "Staff was knowledgeable about the equipment and picked up on my goals and was sensible about my starting point" (Completer)
- "Right now there is a formula...some people might want something different, more customized...more variety would be good" (Wellness coach)

**Conclusions**

- Completion rate for Kickstart is 11%, with only 15 of 135 participants finishing all three appointments
- The greatest dropout occurs after first appointment
- The lack of a tailored program, scheduling conflicts, and difficulties in scheduling appear to affect completion
- Overall opinion of coaches generally high, but opinions of completers more positive
- Tailoring program to correspond more closely with individual interests may increase member retention rates
- Adequate and consistent training of wellness coaches may also improve participant experiences